

# (12) UK Patent Application (19) GB (11) 2 152 667 A

(43) Application published 7 Aug 1985

(21) Application No 8500218

(22) Date of filing 4 Jan 1985

(30) Priority data

(31) 8400105

(32) 4 Jan 1984

(33) GB

(51) INT CL<sup>4</sup>

G01F 23/28 G01S 15/08

(52) Domestic classification

G1G 3B 3N 6S PL

(56) Documents cited

None

(58) Field of search

G1G

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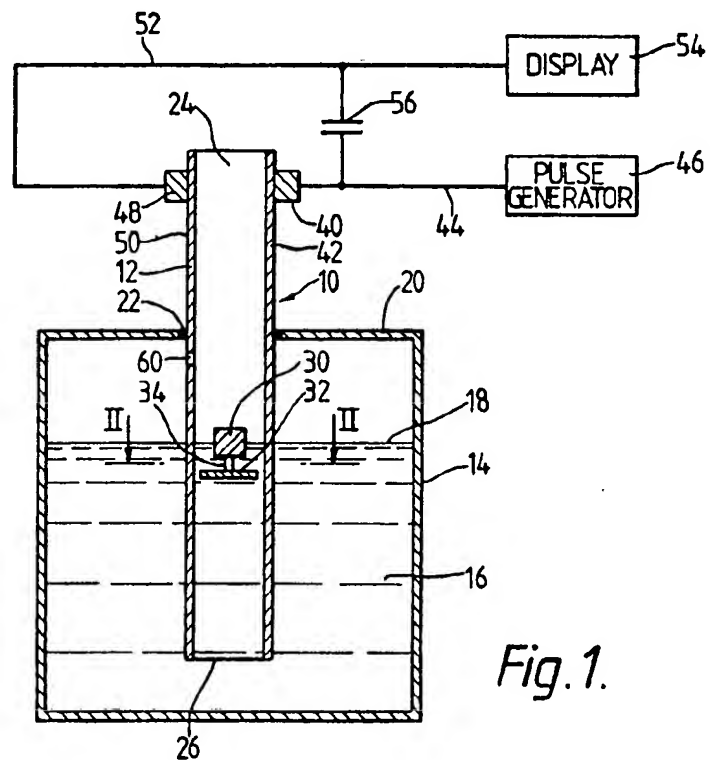
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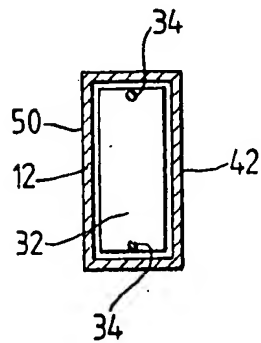
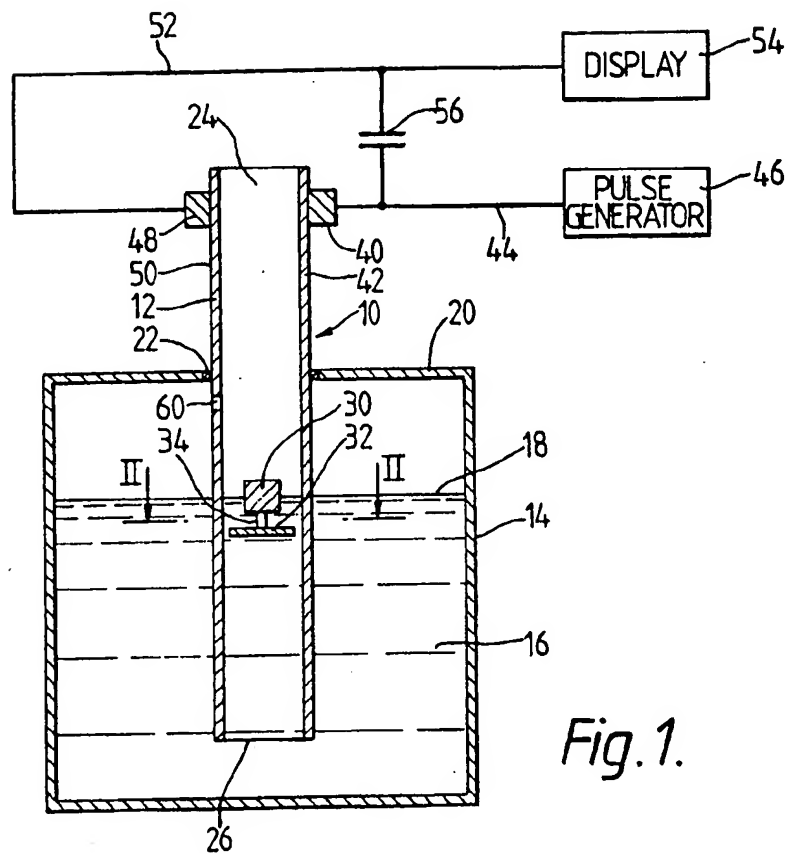
## (54) Liquid level gauge

(57) An ultrasonic liquid level gauge 10 comprises two solid surfaces 42 and 50 in opposed relationship, and a plane reflecting surface 32 supported between the surfaces so as to be slightly below the liquid level 18 in use. A Lamb wave is caused to propagate down one surface 42, undergoing mode conversion to compression waves in the liquid 16 which reflect off the reflecting surface 32 onto the other surface 50, undergoing mode conversion to a Lamb wave propagating up the other surface 50.

The reflecting surface 32 may be supported by a float 30, and the solid surfaces 42 and 50 may be opposite walls of a rectangular tube 12.



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## SPECIFICATION

## Liquid Level Gauge

- 5 This invention relates to a liquid level gauge, which may for example be installed within a liquid 5  
storage tank or dipped into such a tank, to provide an indication of the level of the liquid, and in  
particular relates to a liquid level gauge utilizing ultrasonic waves.
- British Patent No. 2 019 568B describes an ultrasonic liquid level gauge comprising a solid  
surface immersible in a liquid, means for exciting surface acoustic waves in the solid surface,  
10 the surface acoustic waves undergoing mode conversion in the liquid to form compression 10  
waves, and a reflector to reflect the compression waves so formed back to the solid surface. The  
reflector comprises a plurality of individual planar reflecting elements positioned adjacent to the  
solid surface so as to be successively exposed as the liquid level falls. The direction of  
propagation of the compression waves so produced by mode conversion depends on the relative  
15 speeds of the compression waves in the liquid and of the surface acoustic waves in the solid, 15  
and so the inclination of the reflecting elements must be set to the angle appropriate for a  
particular liquid.
- According to the present invention there is provided a liquid level gauge comprising two solid  
surfaces extending in opposed relationship to each other, and arranged so as to be at least  
20 partly immersible in a liquid the position of whose surface is to be determined, a transmitter 20  
arranged to cause surface acoustic waves to propagate down one of the solid surfaces, a  
receiver arranged to receive surface acoustic waves propagating up the other solid surface, a  
plane reflecting surface located between the two solid surfaces so as in use, for at least one  
25 position of the liquid surface, to lie a short distance below the liquid surface and to reflect 25  
compression waves formed by mode conversion of the surface acoustic waves in the one solid  
surface onto the other solid surface so as to generate surface acoustic waves in the other solid  
surface by mode conversion, and means for determining from the waves received by the  
receiver the position of the liquid surface.
- A plurality of plane reflecting surfaces may be provided spaced apart along the solid surfaces.  
30 Alternatively a single plane reflecting surface may be provided, supported by a float so as to 30  
remain the said short distance below the surface. The surface acoustic waves are preferably  
Lamb waves. In a preferred embodiment the two solid surfaces are defined by opposite walls of  
a tube of rectangular cross-section.
- ~~The liquid level gauge of the invention can be used without any adjustment in almost any~~  
35 ~~liquid. Also, since the transmitter and the receiver are coupled to different surfaces, acoustic~~ 35  
~~noise due to transmitter/receiver coupling is minimised.~~
- The invention will now be described by way of example only and with reference to the  
accompanying drawings, in which:-
- Figure 1 shows a diagrammatic sectional view, in a vertical plane, of a liquid level gauge  
40 installed in a tank; and 40
- Figure 2 shows a view on the line II-II of Fig. 1.
- Referring to Figs. 1 and 2, a liquid level gauge 10 comprises a stainless-steel, rectangular  
cross-section section tube 12, which extends downwards into a tank 14 so as to be partly  
immersed in a liquid 16 therein, the position of whose surface 18 is to be determined. The tube  
45 12 passes through the top 20 of the tank 14, being supported by a rubber seal 22, and is open 45  
at its upper end 24 and its lower end 26. Within the tube 12 is a float 30 supporting a  
rectangular, horizontal, flat, reflector plate 32 by means of two vertical struts 34, one at each  
end of the plate 32, so that the plate 32 is supported a short distance below the surface 18 of  
the liquid 16 within the tube 12.
- 50 A transmitter transducer 40 is attached to one broad wall 42 of the tube 12 near the upper 50  
end 24, and is connected by a lead 44 to a pulse generator 46. A receiver transducer 48 is  
attached to the opposite broad wall 50 of the tube 12 near the upper end 24, and is connected  
by a lead 52 to a signal analyser and display 54, the lead 52 being connected through a  
coupling capacitor 56 to the lead 44. A small hole 60 is provided through the broad wall 50 of  
55 the tube 12 below the top 22 of the tank 14, above the highest level to which the surface 18 is 55  
expected to rise, which ensures equality of pressure above the liquid 16 both inside and outside  
the tube 12 and consequently ensures that the surface 18 is at the same level inside and  
outside the tube 12. In addition the hole 60 may be used for calibrating the gauge 10.
- In operation of the gauge 10, the pulse generator 46 is energised to cause the transmitter  
60 transducer 40 to generate a pulse of Lamb waves, which propagate down the broad wall 42 of 60  
the tube 12. Mode conversion takes place below the surface 18, within a few wavelengths of  
the surface 18, generating plane compression waves in the liquid 16. The compression waves  
are reflected specularly by the reflector plate 32. Consequently, at the opposite wall 50 they  
undergo mode conversion to generate Lamb waves which propagate up to the receiver  
65 transducer 48. 11/23/04, EAST Version: 2.0.1.4 65

The signal analyser and display 54 thus receives an initial signal (through the capacitor 56) when the pulse of waves is transmitted, and a return signal (from the receiver transducer 48) when the pulse of waves returns, and from the time interval between these signals the distance from the transducers 40, 48 to the surface 18 is determined and is displayed.

5 Furthermore, owing to the coupling capacitor 56, some of the energy from the pulse generator 46 causes the receiver transducer 48 to generate a pulse of Lamb waves simultaneous with the Lamb wave pulse generated by the transmitter transducer 40 but of smaller energy. This low energy pulse does not affect the operation of the gauge 10 as described above, but will be reflected by the small hole 60 to produce an echo signal at the receiver transducer 48, which 10 may be used for calibration of the gauge 10.

It will be appreciated that the time interval between the initial signal and the return signal depends upon not only the distance between the transducers 40, 48 and the surface 18, but also the time taken to propagate as a compression wave between the wall 42 and the opposite wall 50. This may be taken into account, as the additional time is given by T, where:

$$15 \quad T = \frac{1}{v} \left[ D + \frac{x}{2 \cos \theta} \left[ \frac{v}{u} - \frac{u}{w} \right] \right]$$

in which

20 D = distance of the plate 32 below the surface 18

x = width of the tube 12 between the wall 42 and the wall 50

u = velocity of compression waves in the liquid 16

v = group velocity of Lamb waves

w = phase velocity of Lamb waves, and

25  $\theta = \arcsin(u/w)$

The liquid level gauge 10 will thus operate effectively with almost any liquid 16, though as the additional time T depends on the nature of the liquid 16 the zero of the display 54 might be adjusted for different liquids. The Lamb waves do not tend to propagate around the corners of the tube 12 so very little acoustic background noise is received by the receiver transducer 48. It 30 will be appreciated that free movement of the float 30 and the reflector plate 32 is essential to accurate operation of the gauge 10, and so the gauge 10 is not suitable for use with very viscous liquids.

It will be appreciated that where a continuous indication of the liquid level is not required, the float 30 and the reflector plate 32 may be replaced with a number of reflector plates 32 spaced 35 out along the tube 12 and supported clear of the walls by a support rod (not shown). For example, plates 32 might be located slightly below the lowest and the highest liquid levels expected, so that when the liquid surface 18 is a short distance above one or the other of these plates 32, a return signal will be received.

It will also be appreciated that the tube 12 might be replaced by two solid surfaces in 40 opposed relationship (equivalent to the walls 42 and 50) spaced apart by struts (not shown).

## CLAIMS

1. A liquid level gauge comprising two solid surfaces extending in opposed relationship to each other, and arranged so as to be at least partly immersible in a liquid the position of whose 45 surface is to be determined, a transmitter arranged to cause surface acoustic waves to propagate down one of the solid surfaces, a receiver arranged to receive surface acoustic waves propagating up the other solid surface, a plane reflecting surface located between the two solid surfaces so as in use, for at least one position of the liquid surface, to lie a short distance below the liquid surface and to reflect compression waves formed by mode conversion of the surface 50 acoustic waves in the one solid surface onto the other solid surface so as to generate surface acoustic waves in the other solid surface by mode conversion, and means for determining from the waves received by the receiver the position of the liquid surface.

2. A liquid level gauge as claimed in Claim 1 wherein a plurality of plane reflecting surfaces are provided, spaced apart along the solid surfaces and fixed relative to the solid surfaces.

55 3. A liquid level gauge as claimed in Claim 1 including a single plane reflecting surface supported by a float so as to remain at the said short distance below the surface.

4. A liquid level gauge as claimed in any one of the preceding Claims wherein the two solid surfaces are defined by opposite walls of a tube of rectangular cross section.

60 5. A liquid level gauge substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to, and as shown in, Figs. 1 and 2 of the accompanying drawings.